

Document 1

The following is an excerpt from William Cooper's testimony before the Sadler Committee in 1832.

Sadler: What is your age?

Cooper: I am eight and twenty.

Sadler: When did you first begin to work in mills?

Cooper: When I was ten years of age.

Sadler: What were your usual hours of working?

Cooper: We began at five in the morning and stopped at nine in the night.

Sadler: What time did you have for meals?

Cooper: We had just one period of forty minutes in the sixteen hours. That was at noon.

Sadler: What means were taken to keep you awake and attentive?

Cooper: At times we were frequently strapped.

Sadler: When your hours were so long, did you have any time to attend a day school?

Cooper: We had no time to go to day school.

Sadler: Can you read and write?

Cooper: I can read, but I cannot write.

Document 2

Here is an excerpt from the testimony of Joseph Hebergam to the Sadler Committee.

Sadler: What is the nature of your illness?

Hebergam: I have damaged lungs. My leg muscles do not function properly and will not support the weight of my bones.

Sadler: A doctor has told you that you will die within the year, is that correct?

Hebergam: I have been so told.

Sadler: Did he tell you the cause of your illness?

Hebergam: He told me that it was caused by the dust in the factories and from overwork and insufficient diet. . . .

Sadler: To what was his (your brother's) death attributed?

Hebergam: He was cut by a machine and he died of infection.

Sadler: Do you know of any other children who died at the R____ Mill?

Hebergam: There were about a dozen died during the two years and a half that I was there.

At the L____ Mill where I worked last, a boy was caught in a machine and had both his thigh bones broke and from his knee to his hip the flesh was ripped up the same as it had been cut by a knife. His hand was bruised, his eyes were nearly torn out and his arms were broken. His sister, who ran to pull him off, had both her arms broke and her head bruised. The boy died. I do not know if the girl is dead, but she was not expected to live.

Sadler: Did the accident occur because the shaft was not covered?

Hebergam: Yes.

Document 3

This excerpt is from the 1819 testimony of Dr. Michael Ward during an inquiry into the conditions of cotton factories.

Interviewer: Give the committee information on your knowledge of the health of workers in cotton-factories.

Dr. Ward: I have had frequent opportunities of seeing people coming out from the factories and occasionally attending as patients. Last summer I visited three cotton factories with Dr. Clough of Preston and Mr. Barker of Manchester and we could not remain ten minutes in the factory without gasping for breath. How it is possible for those who are doomed to remain there twelve or fifteen hours to endure it? If we take into account the heated temperature of the air, and the contamination of the air, it is a matter of astonishment to my mind, how the work people can bear the confinement for so great a length of time.

Document 4

This excerpt is from *The Working Man's Companion* subtitled *The Results of Machinery, Namely Cheap Production and Increased Employment*. It was published in 1831.

You are surrounded, as we have constantly shown you throughout this book, with an infinite number of comforts and conveniences which had no existence two or three centuries ago and those comforts are not used only by a few, but are within the reach of almost all men. Every day is adding something to your comforts. Your houses are better built, your clothes are cheaper, you have an infinite number of domestic utensils. You can travel cheaply from place to place, and not only travel at less expense, but travel ten times quicker than two hundred years ago.

Document 5

This description is from a pamphlet published in 1797 by the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor.

The village contains about 1500 inhabitants, of whom all who are capable of work are employed in and about the mills. Of these there are 500 children who are entirely fed, clothed, and educated by Mr. Dale. The others live with their parents in the village and have a weekly allowance for their work. The healthy appearance of these children has frequently attracted the attention of the traveler. Special regulations, adopted by Mr. Dale, have made this factory very different from the others in this kingdom. Out of the nearly 3000 children employed in the mills from 1785 to 1797, only fourteen have died.

Document 6

This account is from an article published in The Ashton Chronicle in 1849.

I was born in Hare Street, Bethnal Green, London, in the year 1805. My father died when I was two years old, leaving two children, myself and Sarah my sister. My mother kept us both till I was about five years old, and then she took badly and was taken to the London Hospital. My sister and I were taken to the Bethnal Green Workhouse. My mother died and we stayed in the workhouse. We had good food, good beds and given liberty two or three times a week. We were taught to read and in every respect were treated kindly.

Document 7

This excerpt from *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* was written by Friedrich Engels after he visited an English industrial city in 1844.

Every great town has one or more slum areas where the workers struggle through life as best they can out of sight of the more fortunate classes of society. The slums . . . are generally unplanned wildernesses of one- or two-storied houses. Wherever possible these have cellars which are also used as dwellings. The streets are usually unpaved, full of holes, filthy and strewn with refuse. Since they have neither gutters nor drains, the refuse accumulates in stagnant, stinking puddles. The view of Manchester is quite typical. The main river is narrow, coal-black and full of stinking filth and rubbish which it deposits on its bank. . . . One walks along a very rough path on the river bank to reach a chaotic group of little, one-story, one-room cabins. . . . In front of the doors, filth and garbage abounded. . . .

Document 8

This table shows:

British Iron Production (1740–1900)	
1740	17,350 tons
1796	125,079 tons
1839	1,248,781 tons
1854	3,100,000 tons
1900	9,000,000 tons